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3 SABINE-NECHES WATERWAY FEASIBILITY STUDY  
4 PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING  
5 MAY 29, 2002  
6 7:00 P.M.  
7

8 JOHN GRAY CENTER AUDITORIUM  
9 855 E. FLORIDA AVENUE  
10 BEAUMONT, TEXAS  
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14 APPEARANCES:

15 Paul Beard  
Jefferson County Waterway & Navigation District  
16

Tom Jackson, General Manager  
17 Jefferson County Waterway & Navigation District  
18 Lloyd Saunders, Chief of Planning,  
Environmental and Regulatory Division  
19 Corps of Engineers  
20 Lizette Richardson, Project Manager  
Corps of Engineers  
21

Janelle Stokes, Environmental Lead  
22 Corps of Engineers  
23 Paula Wise, Planning Lead  
Corps of Engineers  
24  
25

1 MAY 29, 2002

7:00 P.M.

2 [PROCEEDINGS COMMENCED]

3 MR. PAUL BEARD: Good evening. My name is  
4 Paul Beard, and I'm the Chairman of the Jefferson County  
5 Waterway and Navigation District. It's a pleasure to  
6 welcome each one of you tonight to the scoping meeting  
7 being conducted by the Navigation District and the U.S.  
8 Army Corps of Engineers. Hopefully after listening to  
9 the Corps explain some of the complex issues involved  
10 and the studies being undertaken, we will all have a  
11 better understanding of what's going on here with our  
12 waterway.

13 The study of possible navigational  
14 improvements to the Sabine-Neches Waterway is entering  
15 its third year in a four-year study. There have been  
16 several million dollars spent studying the possibilities  
17 of making our waterway more efficient. It's our hope  
18 that the results of these studies will help guide us to  
19 make our waterway more beneficial to all of our  
20 citizens.

21 I'd like now to introduce and turn the  
22 meeting over to Mr. Lloyd Saunders, who is the Chief of  
23 Planning, Environmental and Regulatory Division of the  
24 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

25 Mr. Saunders.

1                   MR. LLOYD SAUNDERS: Thank you, Mr. Beard.  
2   Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. On behalf of  
3   Colonel Waterworth, I welcome you to tonight's Public  
4   Scoping Meeting for the Sabine-Neches Waterway  
5   Feasibility Study.

6                   For the record, let me state that this  
7   Public Scoping Meeting is being convened at 7:00 p.m.,  
8   May 29, 2002, at the John Gray Center Auditorium in  
9   Beaumont, Texas.

10                  As you know, the Corps of Engineers and  
11   Jefferson County Waterway and Navigation District are  
12   conducting a study to determine the economic,  
13   engineering, and environmental feasibility of the  
14   improvements to the Sabine-Neches Waterway. We are  
15   specifically seeking input on the following items:  
16   issues related to changes in salinity and circulation,  
17   changes to fresh and saltwater marshes, issues  
18   associated with water and sediment quality, erosion  
19   along the navigation channels, threatened and endangered  
20   species impacts, opportunities for the beneficial use of  
21   dredged material, and opportunities for ecosystem  
22   restoration.

23                  Additionally, I would like to introduce  
24   those that are with me from the Corps of Engineers this  
25   evening: Ms. Carolyn Murphy, who is Chief of my

1 Environmental Section; Ms. Diana Laird, Chief of  
2 Planning Section; Ms. Lizette Richardson, Project  
3 Manager for the study; Ms. Paula Wise, who is the  
4 Planning Lead for the Feasibility Study; and Ms. Janelle  
5 Stokes, the Environmental Lead for the Sabine-Neches  
6 Waterway Feasibility Study. Ms. Marilyn Uhrich was out  
7 front registering you as you came in. She's with our  
8 public affairs office.

9 I hope that all of you have had an  
10 opportunity to read the announcement of the public  
11 meeting. A fact sheet is also available at the  
12 entrance. I saw Paula handing those out. Perhaps some  
13 of you have them. The announcement, mailing list, and a  
14 list of those present will be made part of the record of  
15 this meeting. We also have a recorder who will  
16 transcribe the proceedings for us.

17 I hope everyone has completed an  
18 attendance card. If not, I ask you to do so now. If  
19 you will raise your hand, someone will bring you a card.  
20 The attendance card is used to record the participants  
21 in this meeting and to inform me of your desire to make  
22 an oral statement. If you indicated on the attendance  
23 card that you want to make an oral statement, you will  
24 be given an opportunity to do so.

25 The purpose of the meeting is to solicit

1 your views, opinions, and recommendations concerning the  
2 Sabine-Neches Waterway Feasibility Study. The  
3 information you present will be used to identify  
4 environmental concerns, adjust the study efforts, and to  
5 meet the National Environmental Policy Act requirements  
6 for preparing an Environmental Impact Statement. Every  
7 effort will be made to address the concerns and issues  
8 identified. There will be additional opportunities for  
9 the public to express their views in other meetings and  
10 workshops in the future.

11 The format of the meeting: First, we'll  
12 have Mr. Tom Jackson of the Jefferson County Waterway  
13 and Navigation District to present an overview of the  
14 Sabine-Neches Waterway. Ms. Lizette Richardson from the  
15 Corps will provide an overview of the study process.  
16 Then Ms. Janelle Stokes from the Corps of Engineers will  
17 provide an overview of the Environmental Impact Study  
18 and the Interagency Coordinating Team process.

19 Following these presentations, I will  
20 accept public comments. I will first recognize elected  
21 federal and state officials that have requested to make  
22 a statement. Then the federal and state resource  
23 agencies will be allowed to speak.

24 Finally, I will recognize each individual  
25 that has indicated they wish to make a statement.

1 Everyone who has indicated a desire to comment will have  
2 an opportunity to do so.

3 Is there anyone who needs to turn in a  
4 card, that you've filled it out and haven't yet turned  
5 it in?

6 Okay. Please give all the speakers the  
7 courtesy of not making any comments during the  
8 presentation. All individuals have an equal right to be  
9 heard.

10 And with that, let me turn it over to  
11 Mr. Tom Jackson, who will give us an overview.

12 MR. TOM JACKSON: Well, good evening. My  
13 name is Tom Jackson. I'm with the Jefferson County  
14 Waterway and Navigation District. It's a little bit  
15 hard yet that -- we had a name change, thanks to your  
16 support, where we went from the "Jefferson County  
17 Navigation District" to the "Jefferson County Waterway  
18 and Navigation District." And, again, thanks for your  
19 support on that.

20 Let me bring you up-to-date on where we  
21 are at as well as where we have been concerning our  
22 channel. This is the existing channel system. If you  
23 will look out into the Gulf, you'll see some brown  
24 spots. Those are some placement areas that we call open  
25 water placement sites.

1           More importantly, the depths and the  
2 widths of the channels vary as we go upstream towards  
3 the Neches River. If you can read those, I won't go  
4 through them. But we start off with an 800-foot width  
5 out in the Gulf. Those sites are dredged periodically  
6 out in the Gulf. It's usually yearly because of the  
7 amount of material that is deposited out there.

8           Again, the history of our channel  
9 deepening, in 1912 when the channel was just formed, it  
10 was more or less an extension of the Port Arthur Canal.  
11 They went to 12 feet -- or 25 feet, which could handle  
12 just about any boat afloat at that time all the way up  
13 until the last time that the channel was improved and  
14 was dredged down to about 40 feet and there was about a  
15 2-foot overdraft. So, the channel is about 42 feet with  
16 2 feet worth of play for error. But that's where we're  
17 at today.

18           The Federal involvement started in about  
19 1875 with the formation, building of the jetties at  
20 Sabine Pass going out into the Gulf. The channel into  
21 Beaumont started in 1912 with a bond issue. That bond  
22 issue -- and the people of Beaumont decided they wanted  
23 deep water into Beaumont; so, they tied onto the  
24 Port Arthur Canal and went north from there.

25           It's also important -- which a lot of

1 people don't realize -- that the channel is Federally  
2 maintained with the Federal Government bringing in the  
3 dredges. The responsibility of the local sponsor, which  
4 in this particular case is the Jefferson County Waterway  
5 and Navigation District, is to provide placement areas  
6 as well as to pay for the levees to contain this  
7 material. Of course, offshore in the Gulf, there are no  
8 levees to contain that material; so, therefore, we are  
9 not involved in that.

10 The berthing areas also -- and what we  
11 mean by "berthing areas," there are several locations up  
12 and down the Sabine-Neches Waterway where the big ships  
13 will go to get out of the channel; and those are also  
14 Federally maintained.

15 Primarily what we're after or what we're  
16 looking at with our studies is the transportation  
17 efficiency of our waterway. The more efficient a  
18 waterway is, the more likely that waterway will be to  
19 attract new business as well as sustain business that is  
20 currently doing business on our waterways.

21 Sabine-Neches Waterway is primarily a  
22 petrochemical waterway due to the petrochemical  
23 refineries and industries up and down the waterway; but  
24 also we must recognize the increased military presence,  
25 specifically in the Port of Beaumont. If you spend some



1 time on the waterway, you will see a lot of these ships  
2 that are loaded with military cargo, primarily out of  
3 Fort Hood and Fort Polk, moving through our waterway  
4 with escort. Also, we've got some bulk grain that is  
5 transported in and out as well as some rock and so forth  
6 through Trinity Industry.

7 The deepening of the waterway from the  
8 Gulf to the Port of Beaumont to improve the  
9 transportation efficiency, of course, is one of the big  
10 parts of our project. Again, we're in the feasibility  
11 phase of this just to see if it is possible. This  
12 feasibility phase, of course, covers many aspects,  
13 modeling in different other areas that we want to look  
14 at. And, of course, we wish we had the answers today;  
15 but unfortunately, we don't. In a couple more years,  
16 then, those answers will hopefully allow us to make a  
17 decision as to where we are going to proceed after this.

18 This next slide will show the existing  
19 placement areas. There are 4 open water placement  
20 areas, which are the ones to the south; and then we have  
21 24 upland placement areas up and down the Sabine-Neches  
22 Waterway.

23 Last night we were in Lake Charles giving  
24 the presentation and the question came up as to how many  
25 placement areas were in Louisiana and the answer is two

1 and those are across from Sabine Pass. Each of the  
2 placement areas are designated a number. Those at  
3 Sabine Pass are Placement Area Number 5, which is our  
4 southernmost on-land placement area and then the one  
5 adjacent north to it is P.A. Number 6 and we go all the  
6 way up to our last, which would be up around the Port of  
7 Beaumont.

8 This map will indicate the size of these  
9 vessels. After World War II, the vessel sizes began to  
10 increase. Again, in 1962 we went to the current  
11 40 feet; and in the meantime, these ships -- and where  
12 they will stop growing, I don't know. But the more  
13 fuel, the more cargo that you can pack aboard one ship,  
14 the more efficient the system operates.

15 We are not only looking at the size of  
16 these ships; we're also possibly looking at -- the size  
17 of ships -- possibly the number of ships using our  
18 waterway may be decreased if we could pack more material  
19 on there. And, of course, with that goes the problems  
20 associated with the erosion, if we could reduce that.

21 Of course, one of the key issues every  
22 time that we get involved with deepening and widening  
23 the Sabine-Neches Waterway is not only for the  
24 efficiency of the system, but also we're looking at the  
25 safety of the system. There are numbers of ships that

1 traverse our waterway. Our Sabine pilots do a great  
2 job. Their record is almost impeccable. And, again,  
3 we're not only looking at the increased number of ships,  
4 of the efficiency of it, but also to try to keep ships  
5 moving in one direction without running into each other.

6 Again, what we're preparing for is the  
7 future. This deepening and widening of the waterway  
8 hopefully will reduce our ship delays. The studies and  
9 the models have proved that.

10 The planning, the authorization, and the  
11 construction of the major navigation projects, it is a  
12 lengthy process, about four years. Approximately one  
13 year of it was in what they call a reconnaissance stage  
14 to look to see if it was warranted for us to go forward  
15 and now an additional four more years of doing some  
16 intense studies.

17 But I'll turn it over to Lizette  
18 Richardson who will bring us into that area and how we  
19 got to where we are today.

20 MS. LIZETTE RICHARDSON: Thank you, Tom.

21 As Tom mentioned, this is the slide that  
22 shows the civil works process of how a project is  
23 initiated with the local sponsor. In this case for  
24 Sabine-Neches, it's the Jefferson County Waterway and  
25 Navigation District. We take it through feasibility

1 phase, then design and construction, and then the  
2 operations and maintenance.

3 The Sabine-Neches Waterway project was  
4 authorized to start the reconnaissance study in 1997 and  
5 then we moved into the feasibility phase in March of  
6 2000 and that's currently where we are right now.

7 This is the actual project timeline. We  
8 are scheduled to have the final Feasibility Report out  
9 for review in July of 2004 and complete the Feasibility  
10 Study with the Environmental Impact Statement in  
11 November of 2004. And if we have a project and it's  
12 authorized, we anticipate we'll start construction in  
13 the fall of 2005.

14 The purpose of the feasibility phase is to  
15 evaluate all alternative plans and select the one with  
16 the greatest economic benefit that is consistent with  
17 the environment. Both go hand in hand together when we  
18 select a plan.

19 The Jefferson County Waterway and  
20 Navigation District, as our sponsor, is cost sharing in  
21 the project. It is a fifty-fifty cost share during the  
22 feasibility phase. And we will also be doing the  
23 Environmental Impact Statement, as I mentioned, as part  
24 of the study.

25 As we evaluate the alternative plans, we

1 will address several engineering issues, environmental  
2 impacts and opportunities, and economic benefits.

3 In the engineering arena, we are studying  
4 depths of 45, 48, and 50 feet and potential widenings.  
5 To address the navigation efficiency and safety, our  
6 Waterways Experiment Station out of Vicksburg,  
7 Mississippi, simulated the movement of vessels up and  
8 down the channel; and the formal testing was done in  
9 Houston in the April to May time frame.

10 We are looking at the dredged material  
11 quantities to come up with a management plan that will  
12 address that we have enough capacity to accept the  
13 maintenance dredge over the 50-year life of the project,  
14 and we are also looking at some real estate studies to  
15 include approximately 70 pipelines that may have to be  
16 relocated.

17 On the environmental side, the following  
18 areas of concern were raised at the May, 2000, public  
19 meeting: Saltwater intrusion impacts on the marshes,  
20 tidal movements, vessel effects, the shoreline erosion,  
21 and beneficial usage of dredged materials.

22 We have modeling and study efforts  
23 underway at various stages to address these terms, such  
24 as the hydrodynamic and salinity model; and we will also  
25 be doing an Environmental Impact Study to address some

1 of these concerns that were raised two years ago.

2 For economics, we will be looking at the  
3 overall project benefits to come up with the National  
4 Economic Development Plan.

5 For Sabine-Neches those benefits will most  
6 likely be related to transportation cost benefits. We  
7 have conducted interviews with the pilots and the  
8 shipping industry to determine those actual costs and  
9 benefits, and analyses on the types of vessels and the  
10 shipping patterns and long-term trends were also  
11 conducted.

12 The feasibility process is an open  
13 process, and we encourage participation of all  
14 stakeholders. We do have local, state, and federal  
15 agency involvement and have established an Interagency  
16 Coordination Team that will help us in the  
17 decision-making process in providing us technical  
18 guidance throughout the entire feasibility phase.

19 That concludes my portion of the program;  
20 and I would like to turn it over to Jan Stokes, who will  
21 be briefing on the Environmental Impact Study and I.C.T.  
22 process. Thank you.

23 MS. JANELLE STOKES: Thank you, Lizette.

24 Good evening. The Corps of Engineers and  
25 the Jefferson County Waterway and Navigation District

1 are conducting studies in support of the Environmental  
2 Impact Statement for the Sabine-Neches Waterway  
3 Feasibility Study. The boundaries for the study were  
4 established in consultation with resource agencies from  
5 both Texas and Louisiana. The study area includes all  
6 areas which could potentially be affected by changes in  
7 salinity and circulation patterns. It extends from Salt  
8 Bayou in Texas on the west to Gum Cove Ridge in  
9 Louisiana on the east and inland to north of Interstate  
10 10.

11 The E.I.S. will evaluate potential changes  
12 in: physical processes such as circulation and  
13 sedimentation; biological resources and habitats; water  
14 and sediment quality; hazardous, toxic, and radioactive  
15 waste; air quality and noise; socioeconomic resources;  
16 historic properties; and cumulative impacts.

17 Concerns have been expressed over the  
18 proposed project's potential impacts to salinity levels  
19 and circulation patterns in the Sabine Lake estuarine  
20 system. These are being addressed with a  
21 hydrodynamic/salinity model which will reflect changes  
22 resulting from the proposed improvements. Resource  
23 agencies from Texas and Louisiana have been involved in  
24 setting requirements for this model.

25 Other studies and models will be used to

1 evaluate effects on shallow groundwater aquifers;  
2 changes in the movement of sediment in the river  
3 channels and Sabine Lake; and changes in erosion rates  
4 along the coastal shoreline at Sabine Pass, the eastern  
5 shore of Sabine Lake, and the navigation channels.

6 To assist in model development, field data  
7 on existing conditions was collected by the Corps, the  
8 Texas Water Development Board, and Lamar University from  
9 May to December, 2001. Data were collected on  
10 salinities, water velocities, channel cross-sections,  
11 water levels, and weather conditions.

12 The E.I.S. is evaluating the effects of  
13 project alternatives on biological resources and  
14 critical habitats. Impacts associated with channel  
15 improvements and associated placement areas are being  
16 studied. Increased salinity intrusion into brackish and  
17 freshwater marshes is being evaluated. Habitat losses  
18 will be discussed in terms of impacts on wildlife,  
19 especially waterfowl and shorebirds. Project impacts to  
20 wetlands will be predicted by salinity, circulation, and  
21 sediment transport models.

22 A biological assessment will be prepared  
23 as required by the Endangered Species Act to determine  
24 project impacts on Federally-listed threatened or  
25 endangered species.



1           The effects of project alternatives on  
2   essential fish habitat will also be evaluated and  
3   related to losses in sports and commercial fisheries.

4           The E.I.S. is evaluating existing water  
5   and sediment quality and changes associated with project  
6   alternatives. The evaluation will include the primary  
7   past and present sources of pollution in the project  
8   area and the results of physical and chemical analyses  
9   of the water and sediments. These studies will be used  
10   to evaluate alternative locations for the placement of  
11   dredged material.

12           A hazardous, toxic, and radioactive waste  
13   assessment is being conducted to identify areas of  
14   concern and to determine potential project impacts.

15           Existing regional air quality data will be  
16   assessed, and changes in shipping practices are being  
17   studied. A Clean Air Act conformity analysis will be  
18   necessary because the Beaumont/Port Arthur area is  
19   currently designated a non-attainment area.

20           Data on noise levels currently associated  
21   with traffic and industry on the Sabine-Neches Waterway  
22   will be compiled, and projections of changes associated  
23   with project alternatives will be generated.

24           A socioeconomic profile of the project  
25   area is being prepared to provide a basis for predicting

1 positive and negative social and economic effects  
2 associated with project alternatives.

3 Environmental justice issues will also be  
4 investigated by identifying social groups within the  
5 study area which may be disproportionately impacted by  
6 the proposed alternatives.

7 Historical and archival research are being  
8 conducted to identify known and potential prehistoric  
9 and historic archeological sites, historic structures,  
10 and shipwrecks which could be affected by project  
11 alternatives.

12 Remote-sensing underwater surveys will be  
13 conducted in affected areas where there is a high  
14 probability for shipwrecks. Terrestrial archeological  
15 surveys will be conducted in high probability areas  
16 which may be affected by upland placement areas or other  
17 project impacts.

18 The E.I.S. will identify past, present,  
19 and reasonably foreseeable future environmental impacts  
20 in the project area. Changes associated with project  
21 alternatives will be added to the past and present  
22 impacts to evaluate cumulative effects on the Sabine  
23 Lake estuarine system.

24 An Interagency Coordination Team, or  
25 I.C.T., has been established to identify environmental

1 concerns associated with the Sabine-Neches Feasibility  
2 Study, to develop scopes of work for studies needed to  
3 address these concerns, to promote effective teamwork  
4 among state and federal agencies, and to contribute to  
5 completion of the E.I.S. and feasibility study.

6 One representative from each interested  
7 state and federal resource agency, the study sponsor,  
8 and the Corps is designated as a voting member of the  
9 I.C.T. other representatives of these agencies also  
10 participate as advisory members, providing technical  
11 guidance to the I.C.T. We have just extended an  
12 invitation to county and parish governments in the  
13 project area, specifically Jefferson and Orange Counties  
14 and Cameron and Calcasieu Parishes, to join the team as  
15 advisory members. The I.C.T.'s decision-making process  
16 is based on reaching a consensus through open  
17 discussion.

18 The I.C.T. establishes subcommittees or  
19 work groups to address technical issues and make  
20 recommendations to the I.C.T. Two work groups have been  
21 established to date: The modeling work group and the  
22 restoration/beneficial uses work group.

23 The restoration work group has just  
24 finished a series of workshops where ideas for ecosystem  
25 restoration and the beneficial uses of dredged material

1 were submitted by user and environmental groups. The  
2 work group and I.C.T. will use these ideas to develop a  
3 plan to use the dredged material beneficially, doing  
4 things such as restoring marshes or creating new marshes  
5 or restoring beach shoreline.

6 Because this project crosses state  
7 boundaries, representatives from both Texas and  
8 Louisiana are members of the team. The following  
9 agencies are members: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service,  
10 National Marine Fisheries Service, National Resource  
11 Conservation Service -- and I believe we have some  
12 representatives from that agency with us tonight -- the  
13 Environmental Protection Agency, Texas General Land  
14 Office, Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission,  
15 Texas Parks and Wildlife, Texas Water Development Board,  
16 the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, the  
17 Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality, the  
18 Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries,  
19 Jefferson County Waterway and Navigation District, and  
20 the Galveston Corps.

21 Environmental impacts will be avoided and  
22 minimized to the maximum extent possible when selecting  
23 a recommended plan. If unavoidable habitat losses  
24 remain, they will be quantified; and mitigation plans  
25 will be developed by the I.C.T. An I.C.T. work group

1 will be formed to advise on the types, quantity, and  
2 location of mitigation measures.

3 Public input is important in this process  
4 to help us identify problems and solutions. The public  
5 is invited to attend scoping meetings such as this one  
6 and provide comments which become part of the official  
7 record. If you prefer to provide written comments,  
8 copies of a form with the name of the Galveston District  
9 Commander, Colonel Waterworth, are available at the  
10 registration table. Another public meeting will be held  
11 next year to obtain comments on the recommended plan.

12 Comments can be presented at that meeting  
13 or provided in writing. The draft E.I.S. will be  
14 circulated for written comments during the spring of  
15 2004. We are here tonight to listen and to learn from  
16 you.

17 Mr. Saunders, I would like to turn it over  
18 to you.

19 MR. LLOYD SAUNDERS: Thank you, Jan.

20 Before we get started, I'd like to  
21 recognize a couple of folks that are with us tonight.  
22 Ms. Lloyd Sanderson, chairman of the Lower Neches Valley  
23 Authority; Mr. George Gardner, Commissioner, Port of  
24 Beaumont. Thank you, sirs.

25 I will now call on those who wish to make

1 a statement. I ask that you limit your oral statement  
2 to no more than three minutes. To assist speakers in  
3 keeping track of time, I have asked Ms. Young, who is  
4 sitting down here, to hold up a card when you have 30  
5 seconds left to speak and a time card when your time has  
6 expired. I ask that you stop after three minutes have  
7 elapsed.

8 When you're called, please come forward  
9 and speak into the microphone that we have placed over  
10 on this side. If you would please identify yourself by  
11 your full name, that will help us keep track of who said  
12 what.

13 The purpose of this meeting is to provide  
14 you with the opportunity to present your views,  
15 opinions, and recommendations concerning the  
16 Sabine-Neches Waterway Feasibility Study. If you desire  
17 to submit a written statement for inclusion in the  
18 record but do not want to make an oral statement, you  
19 may bring your statement to this table; and we'll see  
20 that it's made part of the record.

21 First up, Mr. Bill Worsham.

22 MR. BILL WORSHAM: Thank you,  
23 Mr. Saunders.

24 I know many of you, and I've worn a number  
25 of hats. I'm here just as a citizen, as a person that

1 grew up -- these waterways and the Sabine Lake are my  
2 backyard and where I grew up boating and fishing.

3 I didn't have any prepared statements, but  
4 I just wanted to encourage you through this process to  
5 make full use of the things that a number of us have  
6 been talking about for several years now and taking the  
7 opportunities to use the work that might come about as a  
8 part of this project to restore and reclaim things like  
9 the Bessie Heights Marsh and use opportunities like that  
10 to make dredged material disposal or placement actually  
11 a benefit to the project as opposed to a cost or an  
12 environmental problem to be dealt with. And I think you  
13 guys have made a lot of strides in that regard in the  
14 last few years, and I hope you'll consider that.

15 Also, I am currently doing work on erosion  
16 of shorelines for this waterway; and I hope that the  
17 environmental document -- even though the project itself  
18 may or may not be able to address erosion problems, I  
19 hope the environmental document will at least explore  
20 the impacts, quantify them, or at least qualitatively  
21 discuss them in a way that the environmental documents  
22 that date back to the Seventies have not done. I don't  
23 think that's been done, certainly not in this area,  
24 possibly in others.

25 And I believe that's all.

1 I guess that could fall into a number of  
2 categories, whether it be physical processes or  
3 cumulative impacts. I think those have clearly had an  
4 impact, both for Pleasure Island in Port Arthur and also  
5 up the Neches River Channel.

6 And things like sediment transport,  
7 circulation, and salinity and their effects on the  
8 wetlands in the Lower Neches River Valley have been  
9 profound; and this is a huge opportunity, I think, to  
10 take a look at those and do something positive to  
11 reverse those impacts, at the same time creating a, you  
12 know, potentially great economic project for the area.

13 That's all I have.

14 MR. LLOYD SAUNDERS: Thank you very much.

15 Mr. John Whittle.

16 MR. JOHN WHITTLE: Okay. My name is John  
17 Whittle, of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society.

18 First, I know it may not be strictly in  
19 the scope of this particular meeting; but we are very  
20 concerned that to be sure that the expenditure of this  
21 tax money is a wise and necessary expenditure of tax  
22 money.

23 If the project is, indeed, one of value,  
24 we have concerns, very severe concerns, about the  
25 potential to increase the salinities in the freshwater



1 marshes, particularly in the lower part of the system.  
2 The freshwater marshes are rapidly disappearing from the  
3 scene as they seemingly disappear in the northern part  
4 of the area and more and more saltwater comes in. And I  
5 hope that the Environmental Impact Statement will  
6 address the issues of salinity in the marshes, places  
7 like Murphee and Bessie Heights.

8           There are other issues, of course, related  
9 to the increased flow from the Gulf. None of them seem  
10 to us to be particularly good. We wonder what it would  
11 do to storm surge in a hurricane if the channel is that  
12 much bigger. I hope that that will be addressed.

13           If the project does go forward, we do see  
14 the potential beneficial uses of the dredged spoil -- I  
15 think I'm supposed to call it "dredged material" these  
16 days -- provided the material proves not to be  
17 contaminated in the first half of the last century.  
18 There was an awful lot of industry between 1902 and 1950  
19 without much control, and we hope that that sediment  
20 that may be taken up is not contaminated with heavy  
21 metals and things like this and hope that this will be  
22 carefully evaluated.

23           If it is suitable, then there are marsh  
24 regeneration projects that I know the Fish and Wildlife  
25 Service is interested in doing and the Texas Parks and

1 Wildlife; and these would be good.

2                   The potential for beach erosion control,  
3 mitigation, alleviation, whatever, would perhaps be  
4 trying to alter nature but may be worth doing. And some  
5 people have even suggested that, following the success  
6 of the bird islands in Galveston Bay, that you could  
7 consider one in Sabine Lake. Sabine Lake is much  
8 smaller, but the potential is there for providing an  
9 island for nesting birds.

10                   We thank you for the opportunity to make  
11 comment.

12                   MR. LLOYD SAUNDERS: Thank you. I'll  
13 assure you that everything that we've learned on the  
14 Houston-Galveston Channel will be applied here.

15                   Mr. Richard Harrel.

16                   MR. RICHARD HARREL: My name is Richard  
17 Harrel; and I'm here representing Clean Air and Water,  
18 Inc., which is a local environmental organization.

19                   Clean Air and Water, Inc., is opposed to  
20 the deepening and widening of the ship channel. We are  
21 also opposed to the loss of wetlands and marshlands  
22 which are directly related to the productivity not only  
23 of our estuarine and Sabine Lake area but also to the  
24 Gulf of Mexico. This would have a detrimental effect  
25 biologically.

1                   It would also very greatly alter the  
2 frequency and also the strength of saltwater intrusion  
3 up the system.

4                   And I don't believe that -- have you  
5 considered how it's going to affect operating procedures  
6 for the permanent saltwater barrier? If the barrier  
7 goes in, supposedly they would need less water to flush  
8 out the effluents that are dumped into the system. And  
9 if they need less water to do that because of the  
10 presence of the barrier, then Mr. Stroder could sell the  
11 water to Houston; and we don't want to lose our water  
12 that we have in this area.

13                   So, essentially we are opposed. We know  
14 it's going to -- if this system does go through, you're  
15 also going to have much more frequent maintenance  
16 dredging; and the dredge spoil volume is going to  
17 increase. So, you're going to fill up all the spoil  
18 areas very quickly; and you're going to be looking for  
19 more. That's going to decrease marsh area along the  
20 lake and, in turn, biological productivity of the  
21 system.

22                   Leave it like it is. If you want to  
23 improve the channel, improve it as far as Sabine Pass is  
24 concerned and have your large vessels come that far and  
25 then hook pipelines up and carry it there. Don't mess

1 with the channel from Sabine Pass on up.

2 MR. LLOYD SAUNDERS: Thank you, sir.

3 Mr. Wayne Stupka. I may be mispronouncing  
4 that.

5 MR. WAYNE STUPKA: No. That's right.

6 I represent the Gulf Coast Rod and Reel  
7 and Gun Club and basically reiterate what you've heard  
8 from the previous three speakers.

9 We're really worried about the increased  
10 salinity in our coastal marshes. They have already been  
11 highly impacted by previous projects and left basically  
12 to deteriorate to a small fraction of their productivity  
13 originally, before the first channels were dug; and we  
14 think this will just add to the problem.

15 And if y'all can come up with some type of  
16 reclamation out of this project, that would be great;  
17 but reclamation has been very unsuccessful in the few  
18 areas that I've looked at and especially with areas as  
19 large as Bessie Heights and Keith Lake Marsh.

20 So, we hope that you would at least  
21 consider the problems that this project is going to  
22 produce on our marshes. Thanks.

23 MR. LLOYD SAUNDERS: Thank you.

24 Mr. Ronald Moon.

25 MR. RONALD MOON: My name is Ronnie Moon.

1 I had the opportunity to lease Spoil Area  
2 Number 11 from 1977 to 1982. We had a grant from Texas  
3 A&M and Lamar University. We studied the possibilities  
4 of raising shrimp within one of the impoundment areas.  
5 It was very successful. We ran into some local  
6 problems. We lost our lease, but I have continued to  
7 monitor that area for the last 20 years.

8 I have probably spent a total of 30 years  
9 in Containment Number 11, looking at it. And all I see  
10 happening is that it is going to be completely full of  
11 dredged material within the next few years, and  
12 deepening and widening the channel would probably  
13 totally destroy it. It's the only nursery area that we  
14 have left on Lake Sabine in the Port Arthur area on the  
15 Texas side. It is the only one there.

16 The fish are now starting to spend most of  
17 their time on the Louisiana shoreline because there is  
18 no migration of shrimp and fish from the Texas side  
19 anymore because of the impoundment areas, Numbers 8 and  
20 11, that were built in the Sixties.

21 So, overall, I do not see any benefit of  
22 these dredged material containment areas. You actually  
23 took away thousands of acres of marshland. I understand  
24 it was to protect the lake from the dredged material;  
25 but in doing so, I think a mistake was made. And

1 filling these compartments up is another mistake; so, I  
2 just don't see how two wrongs can make a right. We need  
3 to leave these dredged materials on Lake Sabine -- at  
4 least the north one -- alone so the fish and shrimp can  
5 continue to migrate like they have over the last 15, 20  
6 years.

7 So, my thought on the idea is I have not  
8 seen that much ship traffic increase in the last 20  
9 years. We don't want it wide enough where they can pass  
10 each other coming and going. We would just like to  
11 leave it like it is and leave the marshes and everything  
12 alone.

13 Thank you.

14 MR. LLOYD SAUNDERS: Thank you, sir.

15 That's all the cards that I have from  
16 people who indicated a desire to speak. Is there anyone  
17 else who would like to speak?

18 [NO RESPONSE FROM THE AUDIENCE]

19 MR. LLOYD SAUNDERS: Okay. In conclusion,  
20 the official record will be open for 30 calendar days.  
21 Written statements received on or before June 29th,  
22 2002, will be included in the meeting record.

23 I would like to thank the Jefferson County  
24 Waterway and Navigation District for their efforts and  
25 assistance in this meeting. I thank you for your

1 attendance and the interest that you've shown. The  
2 items that you have raised will be addressed in the  
3 study.

4 This meeting is adjourned.

5 [PROCEEDINGS CONCLUDED, 7:42 P.M.]

6 COURT REPORTER'S CERTIFICATION

7 I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THE FOREGOING IS A  
8 CORRECT TRANSCRIPT FROM THE RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS.

9  
MAY 30, 2002

10 CHRISTINA L. BICKHAM, CRR, RMR  
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CHRONOLOGICAL INDEX

WELCOMING REMARKS, MR. BEARD.....	2
WELCOME AND GUEST INTRODUCTION, MR. SAUNDERS .....	3
PROJECT INTRODUCTION, MR. JACKSON.....	6
FEASIBILITY STUDY UPDATE, MS. RICHARDSON.....	11
E.I.S. STUDY AND I.C.T. PROCESS, MS. STOKES.....	14
STATEMENT FORMAT, MR. SAUNDERS .....	22
STATEMENT, MR. BILL WORSHAM .....	22
STATEMENT, MR. JOHN WHITTLE .....	24
STATEMENT, MR. RICHARD HARREL .....	26
STATEMENT, MR. WAYNE STUPKA .....	28
STATEMENT, MR. RONALD MOON .....	28
CONCLUDING REMARKS.....	30



<p><b>A</b></p> <p>able 23:18  aboard 10:13  accept 5:20 13:12  acres 29:23  Act 5:5 16:23 17:17  actual 12:7 14:8  add 28:14  added 18:21  additional 5:8 11:15  Additionally 3:23  address 5:7 13:1,5,12,23  13:25 19:3,19 23:18  25:6  addressed 15:20 25:12  31:2  adjacent 10:5  adjourned 31:4  adjust 5:4  advise 21:1  advisory 19:10,15  affairs 4:8  affect 27:5  afloat 7:12  agencies 5:23 15:4,23  19:4,9 20:9  agency 14:15 19:7 20:12  20:13  ago 14:1  air 15:15 17:15,17 26:17  26:19  alleviation 26:3  allow 9:16  allowed 5:23  alter 26:4 27:1  alternative 12:15,25  17:10  alternatives 16:13 17:1,6  17:23 18:2,6,11,21  amount 7:7  analyses 14:9 17:8  analysis 17:17  announcement 4:10,13  answer 9:25  answers 9:14,16  anticipate 12:12  anymore 29:19  APPEARANCES 1:14  applied 26:14  approximately 11:12  13:15  April 13:9  aquifers 16:1  archeological 18:9,14  archival 18:7  area 10:3,4 11:18 15:5  17:8,18,19,25 18:5,20</p>	<p>19:13 23:23 24:12 25:4  26:23 27:12,19 29:1,7  29:13,14  areas 6:24 8:5,10,11 9:13  9:19,20,21,25 10:2  13:18 15:6 16:15 17:13  18:13,15,16 27:18 28:18  28:18 29:4,19,22  arena 13:3  Army 2:8,24  Arthur 7:10,24 17:18  24:4 29:14  asked 22:3  aspects 9:12  assessed 17:16  assessment 16:22 17:13  assist 16:6 22:2  assistance 30:25  associated 3:18 10:20  16:14,15 17:5,20,22  18:2,20 19:1  assure 26:13  attend 21:5  attendance 4:18,20,22  31:1  attract 8:19  AUDIENCE 30:18  Auditorium 1:8 3:8  Audubon 24:17  Authority 21:23  authorization 11:10  authorized 12:4,12  available 4:11 21:9  AVENUE 1:9  avoided 20:21  awful 25:18  A&amp;M 29:3</p>	<p>13:21 19:25 25:14  beneficially 20:3  benefit 12:16 23:11 29:21  benefits 13:2 14:3,5,6,9  berthing 8:10,11  Bessie 23:9 25:7 28:19  better 2:11  BICKHAM 31:10  big 8:12 9:9  bigger 25:12  Bill 22:21,22 32:11  biological 15:13 16:13,22  27:20  biologically 26:25  bird 26:6  birds 26:9  bit 6:14  Board 16:8 20:15  boat 7:12  boating 23:2  bond 7:21,21  boundaries 15:3 20:7  brackish 16:16  briefing 14:21  bring 4:19 6:20 11:18  22:19  bringing 8:2  brown 6:23  building 7:19  built 29:20  bulk 9:4  business 8:19,19,20</p>	<p>change 6:15  changes 3:16,17 15:6,11  15:21 16:2,3 17:5,16,22  18:20  channel 6:22,22 7:8,9,13  7:15,20 8:1,13 13:8  16:10,14 24:5 25:11  26:14,20 27:23 28:1  29:12  channels 3:19 7:2 16:3,5  28:13  Charles 9:23  chemical 17:8  Chief 1:18 2:22 3:25 4:1  CHRISTINA 31:10  CHRONOLOGICAL  32:2  circulated 21:14  circulation 3:16 15:7,12  15:19 16:20 24:7  citizen 22:25  citizens 2:20  civil 11:22  Clean 17:17 26:17,19  clearly 24:3  Club 28:7  Coast 28:6  coastal 16:4 28:10  collected 16:7,9  Colonel 3:3 21:9  come 13:11 14:3 22:8 23:7  27:24 28:15  comes 25:4  coming 30:10  Commander 21:9  COMMENCED 2:2  comment 6:1 26:11  comments 5:20 6:7 21:6,7  21:11,12,14  commercial 17:3  Commission 20:14  Commissioner 21:23  compartments 30:1  compiled 17:22  complete 12:9  completed 4:17  completely 29:10  completion 19:5  complex 2:9  concern 13:18 17:14  concerned 24:20 27:24  concerning 5:1 6:21  22:15  concerns 5:4,7 14:1  15:17 19:1,3 24:24,24  CONCLUDED 31:5  concludes 14:19</p>	<p>CONCLUDING 32:16  conclusion 30:19  conditions 16:7,11  conducted 2:7 14:7,11  17:13 18:8,13,15  conducting 3:12 15:1  conformity 17:17  consensus 19:16  Conservation 20:11,14  consider 23:14 26:7  28:21  considered 27:5  consistent 12:16  construction 11:11 12:1  12:12  consultation 15:4  contain 8:6,8  containment 29:9,22  contaminated 25:17,20  continue 30:5  continued 29:6  contribute 19:4  control 25:19 26:2  convened 3:7  Coordinating 5:18  Coordination 14:16  18:24  copies 21:8  Corps 1:19,20,22,23 2:8,9  2:24 3:10,24 5:15,16  14:24 16:7 19:8 20:20  CORRECT 31:8  cost 12:20,21 14:6 23:11  costs 14:8  Counties 19:13  county 1:15,17 2:4 3:11  5:12 6:13,16,17 8:4  11:24 12:19 14:25 19:12  20:19 30:23  couple 9:15 21:21  course 8:7 9:9,12,14  10:19,21 25:8  COURT 31:6  courtesy 6:7  Cove 15:8  covers 9:12  creating 20:4 24:11  critical 16:14  crosses 20:6  cross-sections 16:10  CRR 31:10  cumulative 15:16 18:22  24:3  current 10:10  currently 8:20 12:6 17:19  17:20 23:15</p>
	<p><b>B</b></p> <p>back 23:22  backyard 23:2  barrier 27:6,6,10  based 19:16  basically 28:7,11  basis 17:25  Bay 26:6  Bayou 15:8  beach 20:5 26:2  Beard 1:15 2:3,4 3:1 32:5  Beaumont 1:10 3:9 7:21  7:22,23 8:25 9:8 10:7  21:24  Beaumont/Port 17:18  began 10:9  behalf 3:2  believe 20:11 23:25 27:4  beneficial 2:19 3:20</p>	<p><b>C</b></p> <p>Calcasieu 19:14  calendar 30:20  call 6:24 11:13 21:25  25:15  called 22:8  Cameron 19:14  Canal 7:10,24  capacity 13:12  card 4:18,19,20,23 6:4  22:4,5  cards 30:15  carefully 25:22  cargo 9:2 10:13  Carolyn 3:25  carry 27:25  case 8:4 11:23  categories 24:2  Center 1:8 3:8  century 25:17  certainly 23:23  CERTIFICATION 31:6  CERTIFY 31:7  chairman 2:4 21:22</p>		

<p><b>D</b></p> <p><b>data</b> 16:6,9 17:15,20  <b>date</b> 19:21 23:22  <b>days</b> 25:16 30:20  <b>dealt</b> 23:12  <b>December</b> 16:9  <b>decided</b> 7:22  <b>decision</b> 9:17  <b>decision-making</b> 14:17 19:15  <b>decrease</b> 27:19  <b>decreased</b> 10:18  <b>deep</b> 7:23  <b>deepening</b> 7:9 9:7 10:22 11:7 26:20 29:12  <b>delays</b> 11:8  <b>Department</b> 20:16,17,18  <b>deposited</b> 7:7  <b>depths</b> 7:1 13:4  <b>design</b> 12:1  <b>designated</b> 10:2 17:19 19:8  <b>desire</b> 4:21 6:1 22:16 30:16  <b>destroy</b> 29:13  <b>deteriorate</b> 28:12  <b>determine</b> 3:12 14:8 16:23 17:14  <b>detrimental</b> 26:24  <b>develop</b> 19:2 20:2  <b>developed</b> 20:25  <b>development</b> 14:4 16:6,8 20:15  <b>Diana</b> 4:1  <b>different</b> 9:13  <b>direction</b> 11:5  <b>directly</b> 26:22  <b>disappear</b> 25:3  <b>disappearing</b> 25:2  <b>discuss</b> 23:21  <b>discussed</b> 16:18  <b>discussion</b> 19:17  <b>disposal</b> 23:10  <b>disproportionately</b> 18:5  <b>District</b> 1:15,17 2:5,7 3:11 5:13 6:14,17,18 8:5 11:25 12:20 14:25 20:19 21:8 30:24  <b>Division</b> 1:18 2:23  <b>document</b> 23:17,19  <b>documents</b> 23:21  <b>doing</b> 8:20 11:15 12:22 13:25 20:3 23:15 25:25 26:4 29:25  <b>dollars</b> 2:16  <b>draft</b> 21:13  <b>dredge</b> 13:13 27:16</p>	<p><b>dredged</b> 3:21 7:5,14 13:10 13:21 17:11 19:25 20:3 23:10 25:14,15 29:11,22 29:24 30:3  <b>dredges</b> 8:3  <b>dredging</b> 27:16  <b>due</b> 8:22  <b>dug</b> 28:13  <b>dumped</b> 27:8</p> <p><b>E</b></p> <p><b>E</b> 1:9  <b>east</b> 15:9  <b>eastern</b> 16:4  <b>economic</b> 3:12 12:16 13:2 14:4 18:1 24:12  <b>economics</b> 14:2  <b>ecosystem</b> 3:21 19:24  <b>effect</b> 26:24  <b>effective</b> 19:3  <b>effects</b> 13:20 16:1,12 17:1 18:1,22 24:7  <b>efficiency</b> 8:17 9:9 10:24 11:4 13:5  <b>efficient</b> 2:17 8:17 10:14  <b>effluents</b> 27:8  <b>effort</b> 5:7  <b>efforts</b> 5:4 13:22 30:24  <b>elapsed</b> 22:7  <b>elected</b> 5:20  <b>encourage</b> 14:13 23:4  <b>endangered</b> 3:19 16:23 16:25  <b>engineering</b> 3:13 13:1,3  <b>Engineers</b> 1:19,20,22,23 2:8,24 3:10,24 5:16 14:24  <b>entering</b> 2:14  <b>entire</b> 14:18  <b>entrance</b> 4:12  <b>environment</b> 12:17  <b>environmental</b> 1:18,21 2:23 3:13 4:1,5 5:4,5,6 5:17 12:10,23 13:1,17 13:25 14:21 15:1 18:3 18:19,25 20:1,13,17,21 23:12,17,19,21 25:5 26:18  <b>equal</b> 6:8  <b>erosion</b> 3:18 10:20 13:20 16:3 23:15,18 26:2  <b>error</b> 7:16  <b>escort</b> 9:4  <b>especially</b> 16:19 28:18  <b>essential</b> 17:2  <b>essentially</b> 27:13  <b>established</b> 14:15 15:4</p>	<p>18:25 19:21  <b>establishes</b> 19:18  <b>estate</b> 13:14  <b>estuarine</b> 15:19 18:23 26:23  <b>evaluate</b> 12:15,25 15:11 16:1 17:10 18:22  <b>evaluated</b> 16:17 17:2 25:22  <b>evaluating</b> 16:12 17:4  <b>evaluation</b> 17:6  <b>evening</b> 2:3 3:2,25 6:12 14:24  <b>existing</b> 6:22 9:18 16:7 17:4,15  <b>expenditure</b> 24:20,21  <b>Experiment</b> 13:6  <b>expired</b> 22:6  <b>explain</b> 2:9  <b>explore</b> 23:19  <b>express</b> 5:9  <b>expressed</b> 15:17  <b>extended</b> 19:11  <b>extends</b> 15:7  <b>extension</b> 7:10  <b>extent</b> 20:22  <b>E.L.S.</b> 15:11 16:12 17:4 18:18 19:5 21:13 32:9</p> <p><b>F</b></p> <p><b>fact</b> 4:11  <b>fall</b> 12:13 24:1  <b>far</b> 27:23,24  <b>feasibility</b> 1:3 3:5,13 4:4 4:6 5:2 9:10,12 11:25 12:5,8,9,14,22 14:12,18 15:3 19:1,5 22:16 32:8  <b>federal</b> 5:21,22 7:18 8:2 14:14 19:4,7  <b>Federally</b> 8:1,14  <b>Federally-listed</b> 16:24  <b>feet</b> 7:11,11,14,15,16 10:11 13:4  <b>field</b> 16:6  <b>fifty-fifty</b> 12:21  <b>fill</b> 27:17  <b>filled</b> 6:4  <b>filling</b> 30:1  <b>final</b> 12:8  <b>Finally</b> 5:24  <b>finished</b> 19:24  <b>first</b> 5:11,20 22:21 24:18 25:17 28:13  <b>fish</b> 17:2 20:9 25:24 29:16 29:18 30:4  <b>fisheries</b> 17:3 20:10,18  <b>fishing</b> 23:2</p>	<p><b>FLORIDA</b> 1:9  <b>flow</b> 25:9  <b>flush</b> 27:7  <b>folks</b> 21:21  <b>following</b> 3:15 5:19 13:17 20:8 26:5  <b>FOREGOING</b> 31:7  <b>foreseeable</b> 18:19  <b>form</b> 21:8  <b>formal</b> 13:8  <b>format</b> 5:11 32:10  <b>formation</b> 7:19  <b>formed</b> 7:9 21:1  <b>Fort</b> 9:3,3  <b>forth</b> 9:5  <b>forward</b> 11:14 22:8 25:13  <b>four</b> 11:12,15  <b>four-year</b> 2:15  <b>fraction</b> 28:12  <b>frame</b> 13:9  <b>frequency</b> 27:2  <b>frequent</b> 27:15  <b>fresh</b> 3:17  <b>freshwater</b> 16:17 24:25 25:2  <b>front</b> 4:7  <b>fuel</b> 10:13  <b>full</b> 22:11 23:5 29:10  <b>future</b> 5:10 11:7 18:19</p> <p><b>G</b></p> <p><b>Galveston</b> 20:20 21:8 26:6  <b>Gardner</b> 21:23  <b>General</b> 1:16 20:13  <b>generated</b> 17:23  <b>gentlemen</b> 3:2  <b>George</b> 21:23  <b>give</b> 6:6,11  <b>given</b> 4:24  <b>giving</b> 9:23  <b>go</b> 7:2,3 8:13 10:5 11:14 12:17 25:13 27:14  <b>goes</b> 10:19 27:7  <b>going</b> 2:11 7:20 9:17 27:5 27:14,15,16,17,18,19 28:21 29:10 30:10  <b>Golden</b> 24:17  <b>good</b> 2:3 3:2 6:12 14:24 25:10 26:1  <b>Government</b> 8:2  <b>governments</b> 19:12  <b>grain</b> 9:4  <b>grant</b> 29:2  <b>Gray</b> 1:8 3:8  <b>great</b> 11:1 24:12 28:16  <b>greatest</b> 12:16</p>	<p><b>greatly</b> 27:1  <b>grew</b> 23:1,2  <b>groundwater</b> 16:1  <b>group</b> 19:21,22,23 20:2 20:25  <b>groups</b> 18:4 19:19,20 20:1  <b>growing</b> 10:12  <b>guess</b> 24:1  <b>GUEST</b> 32:6  <b>guidance</b> 14:18 19:11  <b>guide</b> 2:18  <b>Gulf</b> 6:23 7:5,6,20 8:7 9:8 25:9 26:24 28:6  <b>Gum</b> 15:8  <b>Gun</b> 28:7  <b>guys</b> 23:13</p> <p><b>H</b></p> <p><b>habitat</b> 16:17 17:2 20:23  <b>habitats</b> 15:13 16:14  <b>half</b> 25:17  <b>hand</b> 4:19 12:17,17  <b>handing</b> 4:12  <b>handle</b> 7:11  <b>happening</b> 29:10  <b>hard</b> 6:15  <b>Harrel</b> 26:15,16,17 32:13  <b>hats</b> 22:25  <b>hazardous</b> 15:14 17:12  <b>heard</b> 6:9 28:7  <b>heavy</b> 25:20  <b>Heights</b> 23:9 25:7 28:19  <b>held</b> 21:10  <b>help</b> 2:18 14:16 21:4 22:11  <b>high</b> 18:13,15  <b>highly</b> 28:11  <b>historic</b> 15:16 18:9,9  <b>Historical</b> 18:7  <b>history</b> 7:8  <b>hold</b> 22:4  <b>Hood</b> 9:3  <b>hook</b> 27:25  <b>hope</b> 2:17 4:9,17 23:14,16 23:19 25:5,12,19,21 28:20  <b>hopefully</b> 2:8 9:16 11:8  <b>Houston</b> 13:9 27:11  <b>Houston-Galveston</b> 26:14  <b>huge</b> 24:9  <b>hurricane</b> 25:11  <b>hydrodynamic</b> 13:24  <b>hydrodynamic/salinity</b> 15:21</p>
--	---	---	--	---

<p><b>I</b></p> <p><b>idea</b> 30:7</p> <p><b>ideas</b> 19:24 20:2</p> <p><b>identified</b> 5:8</p> <p><b>identify</b> 5:3 17:13 18:8,18 18:25 21:4 22:10</p> <p><b>identifying</b> 18:4</p> <p><b>II</b> 10:9</p> <p><b>impact</b> 5:6,17 12:10,23 13:25 14:21 15:2 24:4 25:5</p> <p><b>impacted</b> 18:5 28:11</p> <p><b>impacts</b> 3:20 13:2,19 15:16,18 16:14,18,19,24 17:14 18:17,19,22 20:21 23:20 24:3,11</p> <p><b>impeccable</b> 11:2</p> <p><b>important</b> 7:25 21:3</p> <p><b>importantly</b> 7:1</p> <p><b>impoundment</b> 29:4,19</p> <p><b>improve</b> 9:8 27:23,23</p> <p><b>improved</b> 7:13</p> <p><b>improvements</b> 2:14 3:14 15:22 16:15</p> <p><b>include</b> 13:15 17:6</p> <p><b>included</b> 30:22</p> <p><b>includes</b> 15:5</p> <p><b>inclusion</b> 22:17</p> <p><b>increase</b> 10:10 24:25 27:17 30:8</p> <p><b>increased</b> 8:24 11:3 16:16 25:9 28:9</p> <p><b>INDEX</b> 32:2</p> <p><b>indicate</b> 10:8</p> <p><b>indicated</b> 4:22 5:25 6:1 30:16</p> <p><b>individual</b> 5:24</p> <p><b>individuals</b> 6:8</p> <p><b>industries</b> 8:23</p> <p><b>industry</b> 9:6 14:8 17:21 25:18</p> <p><b>inform</b> 4:21</p> <p><b>information</b> 5:3</p> <p><b>initiated</b> 11:23</p> <p><b>inland</b> 15:9</p> <p><b>input</b> 3:15 21:3</p> <p><b>intense</b> 11:16</p> <p><b>Interagency</b> 5:18 14:15 18:24</p> <p><b>interest</b> 31:1</p> <p><b>interested</b> 19:6 25:25</p> <p><b>Interstate</b> 15:9</p> <p><b>interviews</b> 14:7</p> <p><b>introduce</b> 2:21 3:23</p> <p><b>INTRODUCTION</b> 32:6,7</p> <p><b>intrusion</b> 13:19 16:16 27:2</p>	<p><b>investigated</b> 18:4</p> <p><b>invitation</b> 19:12</p> <p><b>invited</b> 21:5</p> <p><b>involved</b> 2:9 8:9 10:22 15:23</p> <p><b>involvement</b> 7:18 14:15</p> <p><b>island</b> 24:4 26:9</p> <p><b>islands</b> 26:6</p> <p><b>issue</b> 7:21,22</p> <p><b>issues</b> 2:9 3:16,17 5:7 10:21 13:1 18:3 19:19 25:6,8</p> <p><b>items</b> 3:15 31:2</p> <p><b>LC.T</b> 14:21 18:25 19:9,11 19:15,18,20 20:2,25,25 32:9</p> <p><b>J</b></p> <p><b>Jackson</b> 1:16 5:12 6:11 6:12,13 32:7</p> <p><b>Jan</b> 14:20 21:19</p> <p><b>Janelle</b> 1:21 4:4 5:16 14:23</p> <p><b>Jefferson</b> 1:15,17 2:4 3:11 5:12 6:13,16,17 8:4 11:24 12:19 14:25 19:13 20:19 30:23</p> <p><b>jetties</b> 7:19</p> <p><b>job</b> 11:2</p> <p><b>John</b> 1:8 3:8 24:15,16,16 32:12</p> <p><b>join</b> 19:14</p> <p><b>July</b> 12:9</p> <p><b>June</b> 30:21</p> <p><b>justice</b> 18:3</p> <p><b>K</b></p> <p><b>keep</b> 11:4 22:11</p> <p><b>keeping</b> 22:3</p> <p><b>Keith</b> 28:19</p> <p><b>key</b> 10:21</p> <p><b>know</b> 3:10 10:12 22:24 24:12,18 25:24 27:13</p> <p><b>known</b> 18:8</p> <p><b>L</b></p> <p><b>L</b> 31:10</p> <p><b>ladies</b> 3:2</p> <p><b>Laird</b> 4:1</p> <p><b>lake</b> 9:23 15:19 16:3,5 18:23 23:1 26:7,7,23 27:20 28:19 29:14,24 30:3</p> <p><b>Lamar</b> 16:8 29:3</p> <p><b>Land</b> 20:13</p> <p><b>large</b> 27:24 28:19</p> <p><b>Lead</b> 1:21,23 4:4,5</p>	<p><b>learn</b> 21:15</p> <p><b>learned</b> 26:13</p> <p><b>lease</b> 29:1,6</p> <p><b>leave</b> 27:22 30:3,11,11</p> <p><b>left</b> 22:5 28:11 29:14</p> <p><b>lengthy</b> 11:12</p> <p><b>levees</b> 8:6,8</p> <p><b>levels</b> 15:18 16:11 17:20</p> <p><b>life</b> 13:13</p> <p><b>limit</b> 22:1</p> <p><b>list</b> 4:13,14</p> <p><b>listen</b> 21:15</p> <p><b>listening</b> 2:8</p> <p><b>little</b> 6:14</p> <p><b>Lizette</b> 1:20 4:2 5:14 11:17,20 14:23</p> <p><b>Lloyd</b> 1:18 2:22 3:1 21:19 21:22 24:14 26:12 28:2 28:23 30:14,19</p> <p><b>loaded</b> 9:2</p> <p><b>local</b> 8:3 11:23 14:14 26:18 29:5</p> <p><b>location</b> 21:2</p> <p><b>locations</b> 8:11 17:10</p> <p><b>long-term</b> 14:10</p> <p><b>look</b> 6:23 9:13 11:14 24:10</p> <p><b>looked</b> 28:18</p> <p><b>looking</b> 8:16 10:15,16,24 11:3 13:10,14 14:2 27:18 29:9</p> <p><b>lose</b> 27:11</p> <p><b>loss</b> 26:21</p> <p><b>losses</b> 16:17 17:3 20:23</p> <p><b>lost</b> 29:6</p> <p><b>lot</b> 7:25 9:1 23:13 25:18</p> <p><b>Louisiana</b> 9:25 15:5,9,23 20:8,16,17,18 29:17</p> <p><b>lower</b> 21:22 24:8 25:1</p> <p><b>M</b></p> <p><b>mailing</b> 4:13</p> <p><b>maintained</b> 8:2,14</p> <p><b>maintenance</b> 12:2 13:13 27:15</p> <p><b>major</b> 11:11</p> <p><b>making</b> 2:17 6:7</p> <p><b>management</b> 13:11</p> <p><b>Manager</b> 1:16,20 4:3</p> <p><b>map</b> 10:8</p> <p><b>March</b> 12:5</p> <p><b>Marilyn</b> 4:6</p> <p><b>Marine</b> 20:10</p> <p><b>marsh</b> 23:9 25:23 27:19 28:19</p> <p><b>marshes</b> 3:17 13:19 16:17 20:4,4 25:1,2,6</p>	<p>28:10,22 30:11</p> <p><b>marshland</b> 29:23</p> <p><b>marshlands</b> 26:21</p> <p><b>material</b> 3:21 7:7 8:7,8 10:18 13:10 17:11 19:25 20:3 23:10 25:15,16 29:11,22,24</p> <p><b>materials</b> 13:21 30:3</p> <p><b>maximum</b> 20:22</p> <p><b>mean</b> 8:11</p> <p><b>measures</b> 21:2</p> <p><b>meet</b> 5:5</p> <p><b>meeting</b> 1:4 2:6,22 3:4,7 4:11,15,21,25 5:11 13:19 21:10,12 22:13 24:19 30:22,25 31:4</p> <p><b>meetings</b> 5:9 21:5</p> <p><b>member</b> 19:8</p> <p><b>members</b> 19:10,15 20:8,9</p> <p><b>mentioned</b> 11:21 12:23</p> <p><b>mess</b> 27:25</p> <p><b>metals</b> 25:21</p> <p><b>Mexico</b> 26:24</p> <p><b>microphone</b> 22:9</p> <p><b>migrate</b> 30:5</p> <p><b>migration</b> 29:18</p> <p><b>military</b> 8:24 9:2</p> <p><b>million</b> 2:16</p> <p><b>minimized</b> 20:22</p> <p><b>minutes</b> 22:2,6</p> <p><b>mispronouncing</b> 28:3</p> <p><b>Mississippi</b> 13:7</p> <p><b>mistake</b> 29:25 30:1</p> <p><b>mitigation</b> 20:24 21:2 26:3</p> <p><b>model</b> 13:24 15:21,24 16:6</p> <p><b>modeling</b> 9:13 13:22 19:21</p> <p><b>models</b> 11:9 15:25 16:21</p> <p><b>money</b> 24:21,22</p> <p><b>monitor</b> 29:7</p> <p><b>Moon</b> 28:24,25,25 32:15</p> <p><b>moved</b> 12:5</p> <p><b>movement</b> 13:7 16:2</p> <p><b>movements</b> 13:20</p> <p><b>moving</b> 9:3 11:5</p> <p><b>Murphee</b> 25:7</p> <p><b>Murphy</b> 3:25</p> <p><b>N</b></p> <p><b>name</b> 2:3 6:13,15 21:8 22:11 24:16 26:16 28:25</p> <p><b>National</b> 5:5 14:3 20:10 20:10</p> <p><b>Natural</b> 20:14,16</p> <p><b>nature</b> 26:4</p>	<p><b>navigation</b> 1:15,17 2:5,7 3:11,19 5:13 6:14,17,18 8:5 11:11,25 12:20 13:5 14:25 16:5 20:19 30:24</p> <p><b>navigational</b> 2:13</p> <p><b>necessary</b> 17:18 24:21</p> <p><b>Neches</b> 7:3 21:22 24:5,8</p> <p><b>need</b> 27:7,9 30:2</p> <p><b>needed</b> 19:2</p> <p><b>needs</b> 6:3</p> <p><b>negative</b> 18:1</p> <p><b>nesting</b> 26:9</p> <p><b>new</b> 8:19 20:4</p> <p><b>night</b> 9:23</p> <p><b>noise</b> 15:15 17:20</p> <p><b>non-attainment</b> 17:19</p> <p><b>north</b> 7:24 10:5 15:9 30:4</p> <p><b>northern</b> 25:3</p> <p><b>November</b> 12:11</p> <p><b>number</b> 10:2,3,5,17 11:3 22:24 23:5 24:1 29:2,9</p> <p><b>numbers</b> 10:25 29:19</p> <p><b>nursery</b> 29:13</p> <p><b>O</b></p> <p><b>obtain</b> 21:11</p> <p><b>office</b> 4:8 20:14</p> <p><b>official</b> 21:6 30:20</p> <p><b>officials</b> 5:21</p> <p><b>offshore</b> 8:7</p> <p><b>Okay</b> 6:6 24:16 30:19</p> <p><b>ones</b> 9:20</p> <p><b>on-land</b> 10:4</p> <p><b>open</b> 6:24 9:19 14:12 19:16 30:20</p> <p><b>operates</b> 10:14</p> <p><b>operating</b> 27:5</p> <p><b>operations</b> 12:2</p> <p><b>opinions</b> 5:1 22:15</p> <p><b>opportunities</b> 3:20,21 5:8 13:2 23:7,9</p> <p><b>opportunity</b> 4:10,24 6:2 22:14 24:9 26:10 29:1</p> <p><b>opposed</b> 23:11 26:19,21 27:13</p> <p><b>oral</b> 4:22,23 22:1,18</p> <p><b>Orange</b> 19:13</p> <p><b>organization</b> 26:18</p> <p><b>originally</b> 28:13</p> <p><b>overall</b> 14:3 29:21</p> <p><b>overdraft</b> 7:15</p> <p><b>overview</b> 5:13,15,17 6:11</p> <p><b>P</b></p> <p><b>pack</b> 10:13,18</p> <p><b>parish</b> 19:12</p> <p><b>Parishes</b> 19:14</p>
--	---	--	---	---

<b>Parks</b> 20:15 25:25 <b>part</b> 4:14 12:23 21:6 22:20 23:8 25:1,3 <b>participants</b> 4:20 <b>participate</b> 19:10 <b>participation</b> 14:13 <b>particular</b> 8:4 24:19 <b>particularly</b> 25:1,10 <b>parts</b> 9:10 <b>pass</b> 7:20 10:1,3 16:4 27:23 28:1 30:9 <b>patterns</b> 14:10 15:7,19 <b>Paul</b> 1:15 2:3,4 <b>Paula</b> 1:23 4:3,12 <b>pay</b> 8:6 <b>people</b> 7:22 8:1 26:5 30:16 <b>periodically</b> 7:5 <b>permanent</b> 27:6 <b>person</b> 22:25 <b>petrochemical</b> 8:22,22 <b>phase</b> 9:11,12 12:1,5,14 12:22 14:18 <b>physical</b> 15:12 17:8 24:2 <b>pilots</b> 11:1 14:7 <b>pipelines</b> 13:15 27:25 <b>placed</b> 22:9 <b>placement</b> 6:24,25 8:5 9:19,19,21,25 10:2,3,4 16:15 17:10 18:16 23:10 <b>places</b> 25:6 <b>plan</b> 12:18 13:11 14:4 20:3,23 21:11 <b>planning</b> 1:18,23 2:23 4:2 4:4 11:10 <b>plans</b> 12:15,25 20:24 <b>play</b> 7:16 <b>please</b> 6:6 22:8,10 <b>pleasure</b> 2:5 24:4 <b>Policy</b> 5:5 <b>Polk</b> 9:3 <b>pollution</b> 17:7 <b>Port</b> 7:10,24 8:25 9:8 10:6 21:23 24:4 29:14 <b>portion</b> 14:19 <b>positive</b> 18:1 24:10 <b>possibilities</b> 2:16 29:3 <b>possible</b> 2:13 9:11 20:22 <b>possibly</b> 10:16,17 23:24 <b>potential</b> 13:4 15:11,18 17:14 18:8 24:25 25:14 26:2,8 <b>potentially</b> 15:6 24:12 <b>practices</b> 17:16 <b>predicted</b> 16:20 <b>predicting</b> 17:25 <b>prefer</b> 21:7 <b>prehistoric</b> 18:8	<b>prepared</b> 16:22 17:25 23:3 <b>preparing</b> 5:6 11:6 <b>presence</b> 8:24 27:10 <b>present</b> 4:14 5:3,13 17:7 18:18,21 22:14 <b>presentation</b> 6:8 9:24 <b>presentations</b> 5:19 <b>presented</b> 21:12 <b>previous</b> 28:8,11 <b>primarily</b> 8:15,21 9:2 <b>primary</b> 17:6 <b>probability</b> 18:14,15 <b>probably</b> 29:8,12 <b>problem</b> 23:12 28:14 <b>problems</b> 10:19 21:4 23:18 28:21 29:6 <b>procedures</b> 27:5 <b>proceed</b> 9:17 <b>proceedings</b> 2:2 4:16 31:5,8 <b>process</b> 5:15,18 11:12,22 14:12,13,17,22 19:15 21:3 23:4 32:9 <b>processes</b> 15:12 24:2 <b>produce</b> 28:22 <b>productivity</b> 26:22 27:20 28:12 <b>profile</b> 17:24 <b>profound</b> 24:9 <b>program</b> 14:19 <b>project</b> 1:20 4:2 9:10 11:22 12:3,7,11,21 13:13 14:3 16:13,19,24 17:1,5,7,14,23,24 18:2 18:10,17,20,20 19:13 20:6 23:8,11,17 24:12 24:23 25:13 28:16,21 32:7 <b>projections</b> 17:22 <b>projects</b> 11:11 25:24 28:11 <b>project's</b> 15:18 <b>promote</b> 19:3 <b>properties</b> 15:16 <b>proposed</b> 15:18,22 18:6 <b>protect</b> 29:24 <b>Protection</b> 20:13 <b>proved</b> 11:9 <b>proves</b> 25:16 <b>provide</b> 5:15,17 8:5 17:25 21:6,7 22:13 <b>provided</b> 21:13 25:16 <b>providing</b> 14:17 19:10 26:8 <b>public</b> 1:4 3:3,7 4:8,10 5:9 5:20 13:18 21:3,4,10	<b>purpose</b> 4:25 12:14 22:13 <b>P.A</b> 10:5 <b>p.m</b> 1:6 2:1 3:7 31:5 <hr/> <b>Q</b> <hr/> <b>qualitatively</b> 23:20 <b>quality</b> 3:18 15:14,15 17:5 17:15 20:17 <b>quantified</b> 20:24 <b>quantify</b> 23:20 <b>quantities</b> 13:11 <b>quantity</b> 21:1 <b>question</b> 9:24 <b>quickly</b> 27:18 <hr/> <b>R</b> <hr/> <b>radioactive</b> 15:14 17:12 <b>raise</b> 4:19 <b>raised</b> 13:18 14:1 31:2 <b>raising</b> 29:4 <b>ran</b> 29:5 <b>rapidly</b> 25:2 <b>rates</b> 16:3 <b>reaching</b> 19:16 <b>read</b> 4:10 7:3 <b>real</b> 13:14 <b>realize</b> 8:1 <b>really</b> 28:9 <b>reasonably</b> 18:19 <b>received</b> 30:21 <b>reclaim</b> 23:8 <b>reclamation</b> 28:16,17 <b>recognize</b> 5:20,24 8:24 21:21 <b>recommendations</b> 5:1 19:20 22:15 <b>recommended</b> 20:23 21:11 <b>reconnaissance</b> 11:13 12:4 <b>record</b> 3:6 4:14,20 11:2 21:7 22:18,20 30:20,22 31:8 <b>recorder</b> 4:15 <b>reduce</b> 10:20 11:8 <b>Reel</b> 28:6 <b>refineries</b> 8:23 <b>reflect</b> 15:21 <b>regard</b> 23:13 <b>regeneration</b> 25:24 <b>regional</b> 17:15 <b>registering</b> 4:7 <b>registration</b> 21:10 <b>Regulatory</b> 1:18 2:23 <b>reiterate</b> 28:7 <b>related</b> 3:16 14:6 17:3 25:8 26:22	<b>relocated</b> 13:16 <b>remain</b> 20:24 <b>REMARKS</b> 32:5,16 <b>Remote-sensing</b> 18:12 <b>Report</b> 12:8 <b>REPORTER'S</b> 31:6 <b>represent</b> 28:6 <b>representative</b> 19:6 <b>representatives</b> 19:9 20:7,12 <b>representing</b> 26:17 <b>requested</b> 5:21 <b>required</b> 16:23 <b>requirements</b> 5:5 15:24 <b>research</b> 18:7 <b>resource</b> 5:22 15:4,22 19:7 20:10,14 <b>resources</b> 15:13,15 16:13 20:16 <b>RESPONSE</b> 30:18 <b>responsibility</b> 8:3 <b>restoration</b> 3:22 19:23,25 <b>restoration/beneficial</b> 19:22 <b>restore</b> 23:8 <b>restoring</b> 20:4,5 <b>resulting</b> 15:22 <b>results</b> 2:18 17:8 <b>reverse</b> 24:11 <b>review</b> 12:9 <b>Richard</b> 26:15,16,16 32:13 <b>Richardson</b> 1:20 4:2 5:14 11:18,20 32:8 <b>Ridge</b> 15:8 <b>right</b> 6:8 12:6 28:5 30:2 <b>river</b> 7:3 16:2 24:5,8 <b>RMR</b> 31:10 <b>rock</b> 9:5 <b>Rod</b> 28:6 <b>Ronald</b> 28:24,25 32:15 <b>Ronnie</b> 28:25 <b>running</b> 11:5 <hr/> <b>S</b> <hr/> <b>s</b> 19:15 <b>Sabine</b> 7:20 10:1,3 11:1 15:19 16:3,4,5 18:22 23:1 26:7,7,23 27:23 28:1 29:14 30:3 <b>Sabine-Neches</b> 1:3 2:14 3:4,14 4:5 5:2,14 8:12 8:21 9:21 10:23 11:24 12:3 14:5 15:2 17:21 19:1 22:16 <b>safety</b> 10:25 13:5 <b>salinities</b> 16:10 24:25	<b>salinity</b> 3:16 13:24 15:7 15:18 16:16,20 24:7 25:6 28:10 <b>Salt</b> 15:7 <b>saltwater</b> 3:17 13:19 25:4 27:2,6 <b>Sanderson</b> 21:22 <b>Saunders</b> 1:18 2:22,25 3:1 21:17,19 22:23 24:14 26:12 28:2,23 30:14,19 32:6,10 <b>saw</b> 4:12 <b>scene</b> 25:3 <b>scheduled</b> 12:8 <b>scope</b> 24:19 <b>scopes</b> 19:2 <b>scoping</b> 1:4 2:6 3:4,7 21:5 <b>seconds</b> 22:5 <b>Section</b> 4:1,2 <b>sediment</b> 3:18 15:14 16:2 16:21 17:5 24:6 25:19 <b>sedimentation</b> 15:13 <b>sediments</b> 17:9 <b>see</b> 6:23 9:1,11 11:14 22:19 25:13 29:9,21 30:2 <b>seeking</b> 3:15 <b>seemingly</b> 25:3 <b>seen</b> 30:8 <b>select</b> 12:15,18 <b>selecting</b> 20:22 <b>sell</b> 27:10 <b>series</b> 19:24 <b>Service</b> 20:9,10,11 25:25 <b>setting</b> 15:24 <b>Seventies</b> 23:22 <b>severe</b> 24:24 <b>shallow</b> 16:1 <b>share</b> 12:21 <b>sharing</b> 12:20 <b>sheet</b> 4:11 <b>ship</b> 10:13 11:8 26:20 30:8 <b>shipping</b> 14:8,10 17:16 <b>ships</b> 8:12 9:1 10:11,16 10:17,17,25 11:3,4 <b>shipwrecks</b> 18:10,14 <b>shore</b> 16:5 <b>shorebirds</b> 16:19 <b>shoreline</b> 13:20 16:4 20:5 29:17 <b>shorelines</b> 23:16 <b>show</b> 9:18 <b>shown</b> 31:1 <b>shows</b> 11:22 <b>shrimp</b> 29:4,18 30:4 <b>side</b> 13:17 22:10 29:15,18
---	---	--	---	--

<b>simulated</b> 13:7 <b>sir</b> 28:2 30:14 <b>sirs</b> 21:24 <b>sites</b> 6:25 7:5 18:9 <b>sitting</b> 22:4 <b>Sixties</b> 29:20 <b>size</b> 10:8,15,16 <b>sizes</b> 10:9 <b>slide</b> 9:18 11:21 <b>small</b> 28:12 <b>smaller</b> 26:8 <b>social</b> 18:1,4 <b>Society</b> 24:17 <b>socioeconomic</b> 15:15 17:24 <b>solicit</b> 4:25 <b>solutions</b> 21:4 <b>sources</b> 17:7 <b>south</b> 9:20 <b>southernmost</b> 10:4 <b>speak</b> 5:23 22:5,9 30:16 30:17 <b>speakers</b> 6:6 22:2 28:8 <b>species</b> 3:20 16:23,25 <b>specifically</b> 3:15 8:25 19:13 <b>spend</b> 8:25 29:16 <b>spent</b> 2:16 29:8 <b>spoil</b> 25:14 27:16,17 29:1 <b>sponsor</b> 8:3 11:23 12:20 19:7 <b>sports</b> 17:3 <b>spots</b> 6:24 <b>spring</b> 21:14 <b>stage</b> 11:13 <b>stages</b> 13:23 <b>stakeholders</b> 14:14 <b>start</b> 7:4 12:4,12 <b>started</b> 7:18,21 21:20 <b>starting</b> 29:16 <b>state</b> 3:6 5:21,22 14:14 19:4,7 20:6 <b>statement</b> 4:22,23 5:6,22 5:25 12:10,23 15:2 22:1 22:1,17,18,19 25:5 32:10,11,12,13,14,15 <b>statements</b> 23:3 30:21 <b>Station</b> 13:6 <b>Stokes</b> 1:21 4:5 5:16 14:20,23 32:9 <b>stop</b> 10:12 22:6 <b>storm</b> 25:11 <b>strength</b> 27:2 <b>strictly</b> 24:18 <b>strides</b> 23:13 <b>Stroder</b> 27:10 <b>structures</b> 18:9	<b>studied</b> 16:16 17:17 29:3 <b>studies</b> 2:10,18 8:16 11:8 11:16 13:14 15:1,25 17:9 19:2 <b>study</b> 1:3 2:13,15 3:5,12 4:3,4,6 5:2,4,15,17 12:4 12:10,24 13:22,25 14:21 15:3,3,5 18:5 19:2,5,7 22:16 31:3 32:8,9 <b>studying</b> 2:16 13:3 <b>Stupka</b> 28:3,5 32:14 <b>subcommittees</b> 19:18 <b>submit</b> 22:17 <b>submitted</b> 20:1 <b>success</b> 26:5 <b>successful</b> 29:5 <b>suggested</b> 26:5 <b>suitable</b> 25:23 <b>support</b> 6:16,19 15:1 <b>supposed</b> 25:15 <b>supposedly</b> 27:7 <b>sure</b> 24:20 <b>surge</b> 25:11 <b>surveys</b> 18:12,15 <b>sustain</b> 8:19 <b>system</b> 6:22 10:14,24,25 15:20 18:23 25:1 27:3,8 27:14,21	<b>threatened</b> 3:19 16:24 <b>three</b> 22:2,6 28:8 <b>tidal</b> 13:20 <b>tied</b> 7:23 <b>time</b> 7:12,13 9:1 10:22 13:9 22:3,5,5 24:11 29:17 <b>timeline</b> 12:7 <b>today</b> 7:17 9:14 11:19 <b>Tom</b> 1:16 5:12 6:11,12,13 11:20,21 <b>tonight</b> 2:6 20:12 21:15 21:21 <b>tonight's</b> 3:3 <b>total</b> 29:8 <b>totally</b> 29:13 <b>toxic</b> 15:14 17:12 <b>track</b> 22:3,11 <b>traffic</b> 17:21 30:8 <b>transcribe</b> 4:16 <b>TRANSCRIPT</b> 31:8 <b>transport</b> 16:21 24:6 <b>transportation</b> 8:16 9:9 14:6 <b>transported</b> 9:5 <b>traverse</b> 11:1 <b>trends</b> 14:10 <b>Triangle</b> 24:17 <b>Trinity</b> 9:6 <b>try</b> 11:4 <b>trying</b> 26:4 <b>turn</b> 2:21 6:3,10 11:17 14:20 21:17 27:20 <b>turned</b> 6:4 <b>two</b> 9:25 14:1 19:20 30:2 <b>type</b> 28:15 <b>types</b> 14:9 21:1	<b>usually</b> 7:6 <b>U.S</b> 2:7,24 20:9	<b>widenings</b> 13:4 <b>width</b> 7:4 <b>widths</b> 7:2 <b>wildlife</b> 16:18 20:9,15,18 25:24 26:1 <b>wise</b> 1:23 4:3 24:21 <b>wish</b> 5:25 9:14 21:25 <b>wonder</b> 25:10 <b>work</b> 19:2,19,20,21,22,23 20:2,25 23:7,15 <b>works</b> 11:22 <b>workshops</b> 5:10 19:24 <b>World</b> 10:9 <b>worn</b> 22:24 <b>worried</b> 28:9 <b>Worsham</b> 22:21,22 32:11 <b>worth</b> 7:16 26:4 <b>writing</b> 21:13 <b>written</b> 21:7,14 22:17 30:21 <b>wrongs</b> 30:2	
	<b>T</b> <b>table</b> 21:10 22:19 <b>take</b> 11:25 24:10 <b>taken</b> 25:20 <b>talking</b> 23:6 <b>tax</b> 24:21,21 <b>team</b> 5:18 14:16 18:24 19:14 20:8 <b>teamwork</b> 19:3 <b>technical</b> 14:17 19:10,19 <b>terms</b> 13:23 16:18 <b>Terrestrial</b> 18:14 <b>testing</b> 13:8 <b>Texas</b> 1:10 3:9 15:5,8,23 16:8 20:7,13,14,15,15 25:25 29:2,15,18 <b>thank</b> 3:1 11:20 14:22,23 21:19,24 22:22 24:14 26:10,12 28:2,23 30:13 30:14,23,25 <b>thanks</b> 6:15,18 28:22 <b>things</b> 20:4 23:5,8 24:6 25:21 <b>think</b> 23:12,23 24:3,9 25:15 28:14 29:25 <b>third</b> 2:15 <b>thought</b> 30:7 <b>thousands</b> 29:23	<b>U</b> <b>Uhrich</b> 4:6 <b>unavoidable</b> 20:23 <b>understand</b> 29:23 <b>understanding</b> 2:11 <b>undertaken</b> 2:10 <b>underwater</b> 18:12 <b>underway</b> 13:23 <b>unfortunately</b> 9:15 <b>University</b> 16:8 29:3 <b>unsuccessful</b> 28:17 <b>UPDATE</b> 32:8 <b>upland</b> 9:21 18:16 <b>upstream</b> 7:2 <b>up-to-date</b> 6:20 <b>usage</b> 13:21 <b>use</b> 3:20 20:2,3 23:5,7,9 <b>user</b> 20:1 <b>uses</b> 19:22,25 25:14	<b>V</b> <b>Valley</b> 21:22 24:8 <b>value</b> 24:23 <b>various</b> 13:23 <b>vary</b> 7:2 <b>velocities</b> 16:10 <b>vessel</b> 10:9 13:20 <b>vessels</b> 10:9 13:7 14:9 27:24 <b>Vicksburg</b> 13:6 <b>views</b> 5:1,9 22:14 <b>volume</b> 27:16 <b>voting</b> 19:8	<b>W</b> <b>want</b> 4:23 9:13 22:18 27:11,22 30:9 <b>wanted</b> 7:22 23:4 <b>War</b> 10:9 <b>warranted</b> 11:14 <b>waste</b> 15:15 17:12 <b>water</b> 3:18 6:25 7:23 9:19 15:13 16:8,10,11 17:4,9 20:15 26:17,19 27:7,9 27:11,11 <b>waterfowl</b> 16:19 <b>waterway</b> 1:3,15,17 2:5 2:12,14,17,19 3:4,11,14 4:6 5:2,12,14 6:14,17 8:4,12,17,18,18,21,22 8:23 9:1,3,7,22 10:18,23 11:1,7,24 12:3,19 14:25 15:2 17:21 20:19 22:16 23:16 30:24 <b>waterways</b> 8:20 13:6 23:1 <b>Waterworth</b> 3:3 21:9 <b>way</b> 7:12 10:6 23:21 <b>Wayne</b> 28:3,5 32:14 <b>weather</b> 16:11 <b>welcome</b> 2:6 3:3 32:6 <b>WELCOMING</b> 32:5 <b>went</b> 6:16 7:11,24 10:10 <b>west</b> 15:8 <b>wetlands</b> 16:20 24:8 26:21 <b>we'll</b> 5:11 12:12 22:19 <b>we're</b> 7:16 8:15,15 9:10 10:16,24 11:3,6 28:9 <b>we've</b> 9:4 26:13 <b>Whittle</b> 24:15,16,17 32:12 <b>wide</b> 30:9 <b>widening</b> 10:22 11:7 26:20 29:12	<b>Y</b> <b>year</b> 2:15 11:13 21:11 <b>yearly</b> 7:6 <b>years</b> 9:15 11:12,15 14:1 23:6,14 29:7,8,11 30:6,9 <b>Young</b> 22:3 <b>y'all</b> 28:15
	<b>I</b> <b>10</b> 15:10 <b>11</b> 29:2,9,20 32:8 <b>12</b> 7:11 <b>14</b> 32:9 <b>15</b> 30:5 <b>1875</b> 7:19 <b>1902</b> 25:18 <b>1912</b> 7:9,21 <b>1950</b> 25:18 <b>1962</b> 10:10 <b>1977</b> 29:2 <b>1982</b> 29:2 <b>1997</b> 12:4	<b>2</b> <b>2</b> 7:16 32:5 <b>2-foot</b> 7:15 <b>20</b> 29:7 30:5,8 <b>2000</b> 12:6 13:18 <b>2001</b> 16:9 <b>2002</b> 1:5 2:1 3:8 30:22 31:9 <b>2004</b> 12:9,11 21:15 <b>2005</b> 12:13 <b>22</b> 32:10,11 <b>24</b> 9:21 32:12			

<b>25</b> 7:11 <b>26</b> 32:13 <b>28</b> 32:14,15 <b>29</b> 1:5 2:1 3:8 <b>29th</b> 30:21 <hr/> <b>3</b> <hr/> <b>3</b> 32:6 <b>30</b> 22:4 29:8 30:20 31:9 32:16 <hr/> <b>4</b> <hr/> <b>4</b> 9:19 <b>40</b> 7:14 10:11 <b>42</b> 7:15 <b>45</b> 13:4 <b>48</b> 13:4 <hr/> <b>5</b> <hr/> <b>5</b> 10:3 <b>50</b> 13:4 <b>50-year</b> 13:13 <hr/> <b>6</b> <hr/> <b>6</b> 10:5 32:7 <hr/> <b>7</b> <hr/> <b>7:00</b> 1:6 2:1 3:7 <b>7:42</b> 31:5 <b>70</b> 13:15 <hr/> <b>8</b> <hr/> <b>8</b> 29:19 <b>800-foot</b> 7:4 <b>855</b> 1:9				
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